

# THE REGISTER



WINTER 2010



# the register

2010

VOLUME CXXXI WINTER ISSUE

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*The Register* is published twice a year by the students of the Boston Latin School. Students in Classes I through VI are invited to submit their original writing and artwork. Pieces are selected by the Editorial Board of *The Register* on the basis of quality, not name recognition; the writers of all pieces remain anonymous to the Editorial Board during the selection process to ensure that no one is given an unfair advantage.

# the register

WINTER 2010 BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL  
VOLUME CXXXI, ISSUE I

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*Ashes*, pastel  
Faith Zeng, I

Faith Zeng  
9/09

# *degrees of feeling*

*There are degrees of feeling, she says  
and I'm comfortably numb, withdrawn from the outside,  
introspective to a fault.*

*I'm becoming detached and mismatched with the world, parades go by and I just stare blankly and I'm cold,  
I'm so cold, I'm senseless and shivering in my coat.*

*And look, she says, taking off her mittens,  
My fingers are turning white !  
My apathy is becoming physical.*

*That's not apathy, he says.  
You're just suffering from an acute case of winter.*

-----  
And he's right, to an extent.

Come springtime she'll be laughing and spinning and running through meadows, all bruises and grass stains and shining eyes. So it's not really that she's unfeeling, it's that she's too feeling, too receptive to the world around her. She's a chameleon, a protean goddess and she changes with the seasons, thrives in the sunlight and stiffens in the cold.

In summer? She's free, free to dream and dance and just be so she writes love letters to no one and leaves them in empty mailboxes. She's boundless, she bubbles and runs and sings far more than is practical or acceptable to the neighbors.

In fall? She's woodsmoke and hot cider, smells like spice and waxes poetic. She wonders and wanders and philosophizes, fills up little books with solemn words and autumn leaves. She's hopeful, full of tea and hot soup and content to a consummate degree.

And then winter comes round and she's cold again, she withdraws, she feels nothing sees nothing hears nothing has to wrap her arms tight around her sides to hold herself together. She forgets about warmth, about wildflowers, about summer breezes, forgets that there's no consolation in desolation and becomes a poster of a girl, a facsimile sham of a husk of a person.



----  
*They walk in silence for a while.*

*When they reach her house they stop and stand still for a moment, as if neither of them remembers how they got there or how to say goodbye. They look around a little, awkwardly, and then she hugs him and says well bye then see you later and he hugs her back and says*

*bye*

*and she walks up the path to her house and he watches her go, watches her take brisk little steps and take off her mittens when she gets to her door and fumble with the key because her fingers are stiff from the cold and never look back and not say a word.*

----  
Sometimes if he closes his eyes he can imagine that it's not she that's changing with the seasons but the seasons that are changing with her moods.

She cries when it rains.

or

It rains when she cries.

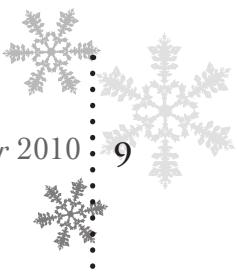
Maybe one isn't more accurate than the other,  
maybe it all just depends on how you look at it.

Because, really, isn't everything just a matter of perception? If she's his own personal force of nature, his tornado, his typhoon, why shouldn't she be the one who determines the parameters of his world?

If she's what he sees when he closes his eyes,

why not?

— Reed McConnell, II





*Tree of Life*, marker, Micron pen  
Justice Tocker, I

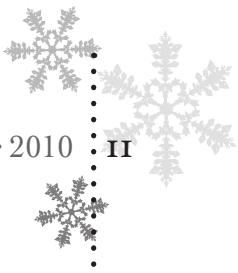
# metamorphosis

he engorged himself,  
full, with the bounty of the earth,  
evident within the rolls of his opulent belly,  
and slept.

a sleep akin to death,  
encased in leaden fear  
of his very own construction,  
and woke.

awoke to brighter days,  
no longer burdened by strident scrutiny of others,  
free, of the self-inflicted fetters of the past,  
he spread his wings,  
and flew

— Emmanuel Oppong-Yeboah, II





*[Untitled]*, watercolor  
Dan Hoff, I

# blue

I am completely in blue today.

“Rhapsody in Blue,” you murmur. I shake my head.

“No, just blue.”

“Nothing is ‘just’ anything with you.”

Blue because it’s the color of the sky when I’m happiest, water (the same shade as the sky), the cover of my favorite book-of-the-moment (I’m always reading something different), and my cousin’s eyes.

Red is your favorite color because it’s the color of autumn leaves, fire, your mother’s hair, and the ink I’m using (it’s smudging onto my hands).

We Summer Salt dizzily through the ocean tide. You find red coral and I find my blue water.

“Mix blue and red and what do you get?” I ask.

“Purple...” you answer hesitantly. I grin.

“I never really liked purple,” I tell you.

“Really?”

“Really.”

You distract me by kissing me long and hard until our lips are painted with faint purplish bruises. Your eyes sparkle. “How could you not like purple? It means us.”

A month later, your favorite color is green. You tell me because it’s the color of dewy clean grass, traffic lights letting you go, California palm fronds, and the color my toenails are painted.

I know you’re lying; I see the way you look at me when I smile at your best friend. It’s because green means envy.

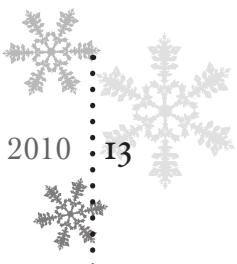
I tell you it’s still blue for me. Blue because it’s what they call it when you’re sad - The Blues. I sense another traffic light color, but not green, yellow. A yellow that’s telling us we’re slowing down.

Two months after that, you tell me

- your favorite color is pink only because it’s Her favorite color,
- you don’t love me anymore and don’t know how to tell me except to say just that - “I don’t love you,”
- purple used to mean us, but now it doesn’t. It means you and Her.

“

**B**lue because it was the color of the sky when I was happiest, a color I never see anymore, crushed blueberries that were spilled in the sink and I never bothered to pick up because they stain my fingers, and a blue jay sitting on a naked winter tree branch, singing.”



But I know that pink and pink won't make purple like blue and red used to.  
I don't cry for you until you leave the house, leave me.

But it's still blue. Blue because it was the color of the sky when I was happiest, a color I never see anymore, crushed blueberries that were spilled in the sink and I never bothered to pick up because they stain my fingers, and a blue jay sitting on a naked winter tree branch, singing.

A blue ocean of tears and five times as many sunny days later, I see you again. You're with Her. She's beautiful and her stomach is round and her shirt is pink and her eyes are brown. You're holding her hand and looking so happy.

It's still blue for me. It's always been blue, even if you weren't always red or green or pink. It's blue because it's a primary color and can stand by itself, it's the color of the flowers blooming in the park (and one in my hair), the ribbon I won for the story not about you, and my worn-in denim. With or without you, it's always been blue. I smile and don't even wonder what your favorite color is now.

— Lian Parsons, V



# *sophie's* rhyme

Who is this Flagrant Fire-child? This vagrant, wild, daughter-in-exile?

Or this sickly son, the Wiry One, tasked to a fiery trial?

She sits in solemn, slender silence, smoking- choking on the pleasures of her pride, while, he, the noble,  
loses solace in his stride.

He, unnoticed, thinks, blinking the inky smoke out from his eyes.

He, unnoticed, takes her- makes her come out from underneath rainy skies.

He, unnoticed, never acting, compacts inaction, gleaming meaning from her demise.

A glance: a chance to see her final fleeting dance.

The dance of the Dead.

One puff: enough to mask the face of pain.

A bluff, nothing lost and nothing gained, she stays there sitting, smoking- choking in the rain.

The tide, Changer, ever stranger, shifts the silence all the while.

— Miles Grover, II



*Mountain Pines*, watercolor  
Alex Dorgan, I

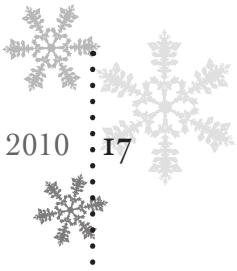
# 11.02

The sky is so bloody  
ashes mist the air there's  
death in the wind today.

Their whole existence bled into those walls  
they shuddered and moaned and clutched each other's skin  
barefoot, naked, wretched  
lungs gasping for life it was  
Hell. Not Hell on Earth because  
Hell swallows up Earth, warps it, discards it,  
leaves it for dead.

A love poem  
wrapped in blood red: it's a parody  
and a miracle all at once, a rose  
sprouting from the grave of a murderer.

— Ella Mahony, II





*R.E.M.*, marker, Micron pen

Emily Chen, III

# smells like *heaven*

It's six-thirty A.M., and I've just landed at Shannon International Airport off the western coast of Ireland in the County Clare. I walk out of the plane into a long, leathery room where I circle a large, silver and black conveyer belt in attempt to collect my luggage. My lungs are instantaneously engulfed with the overwhelming sense of Europe. I am lost in an abyss of euros, rich chocolate, driving on the left-side of the road, and accents. But nothing compares to the inescapable and overpowering refreshment that seeps into your bloodstream and fills your mind as the motion-censored doors separate as you first step foot on land. Exiting through the two sliding doors I am struck back by the brisk winds of Ireland. The scent that occupies my thoughts and takes my breath away is unlike any other thing that can be described. Words cannot explain the rush of the distinct smell of a different country. The smell that I experienced leaving Shannon Airport on that rainy, Friday morning, as I had experienced many times in the past can only be described and reasoned as smelling like Ireland.

Walking out onto the pavement, I am stopped by the rush of burning turf entering into my nose and calming my body. I smell green, if it is possible to smell a color. All I can think as I breathe in and out is of shamrocks, grass, animals grazing, cows mooing in unison, and slender, winding paths. I close my eyes and all I can see is my family, talking and laughing around a warm, stove-top fire. There is celebration, laughter, friendship, and most of all there is love. With the cool summer breeze of Ireland comes images of a hot meal, concocted of juicy meats, creamy vegetables, hot tea, bitter wine, cold beer, and simmering gravy. I can hear old Irish melodies being played in harmony in the back room of a dark-tinted pub. Music echoes throughout my ears, mixed amongst the beats of sheep-skin drums, the sweet chirp of tin whistles, and the cry of an old fiddle. It is hard to see much detail in the faces of the workingmen through the smoke-filled room. I can vaguely make out the smirks on their faces and the dust on their clothes after a hard day of labor. The scruffy men head out under the midnight-blue and purple sky to part ways before heading home to green-eyed, blonde-haired children in small, brown and white thatched cottages. I take a few more steps. The burning sensation I take in is full of smiling faces, whispered prayers, and pride. Who would have known that you could smell the bond between two people, not to mention in the matter of seconds. Now crowds of locals in my imagination kneel to pray at dawn, as a quiet church is dotted with lit magenta candles and a wooden cross on each of the four walls. I imagine baby chickens and barking dogs running through open fields, assisting their masters with the farming. I can hear the rat-a-tat-tat of the cranking engine of an old tractor heading up the road. And most of all I can see the beautiful smile of the devil, the sly grin of a guilty Irish man with that look in his eye that any woman inevitably and uncontrollably falls in love with. Inhale, exhale. This is Ireland.

Some think that saying that something smells like a country is crazy and irrational. They don't understand the uniqueness and individuality that comes with the air of another place. The feeling that comes with the breeze of a country other than your own is not only special but inexplicably cultural. In one breath you can picture everything about a country, just by the way it smells. The food, culture,

laughter, customs, animals, dances, music, and people of a place can all get squished together in that one inhalation of happiness and satisfaction. I've never traveled to Spain but if I did I imagine I could smell the bulls running and the chatter amongst people of Madrid. I just as easily can imagine the smell of kangaroos in Australia and the smell of intelligence and tea in England. No matter what, you cannot fully understand the beauty behind smelling another country until you actually have stepped foot on land and breathed in every unique angle it has to offer. The smell afterward will forever be written into your memory as the name 'Johnny' on a cement sidewalk. Inhale, exhale. It smells like Ireland. And without even knowing it, I am taken back. Even if I try to hide it, a smile will break across my face as my lips curl in to a mischievous grin. Inhale, exhale. And I am taken back.

Siobhan Elvin, I



*[Untitled]*, pencil  
Zoe Li, III

# i believe

*“And I believe in monsters lurking under the bed, because they give our children something to conquer, before the world begins to conquer them.”*

*-Staceyann Chin*

In the flight of children with loose shoelaces  
In turning and keeping the oven light on  
In reading and rereading the same passage in history  
where metaphors lie

And I believe in the absence of superstition  
And I believe in everyday miracles  
148,000 children were born today  
And every second is accompanied by my quickened breath  
And every minute is my own second chance

I believe in  
The personality of the dog  
The hunger of the cat  
The danger that locks the zookeeper in, as he feeds his wild beasts  
And I believe in the importance of slowing the body to a sleep  
In relaxation, please  
I dictate my suggestion  
But you spend the night in the hospital anyway  
Because one stroke will not kill you,  
But it would kill me not to check all of your vital functions.

And I believe in the value  
Of my blood and your trust,  
The currency of prospering nations,  
The decisions of revolutionaries  
And I believe in rebellion  
And I believe in the power  
Of flowing thought

— Maya Nojehowicz, II



*Lost and Found*, watercolor, Micron pen,  
Jakara Tolbert, I

# knives don't have your back

She's Lady Lay with the blue-brown eyes but when she was small she spent too much time sitting in silence or following the leader, biting her nails and worrying about the consequences when she should have been throwing caution to the wind or dancing in the rain.

The other kids would climb trees, ford rivers, tumble down hills. They would scramble over garden fences and steal tomatoes while she looked on, mouth watering, as they bit into them like pears or ripe peaches and the pulpy red juice ran in rivulets down their chins. She would stand there, torn between her desire and the consequences of being caught, and would never end up doing a thing.

Time passed and she grew passive. She learned how to be invisible, how to fade, chameleon-like, into the background and hold still until danger passed. She learned how to give up on her dreams and push away the people that mattered the most.

So she ended up damaged. Comparatively. Everyone is damaged in some way or another but she's worse, she's a ghost, she spent too many years embracing caution rather than throwing it to the wind and just look what happened, it devoured her, it ate her up from the inside out. At least that's how she used to see it, what she used to tell herself.

Now she's too convoluted to care, her insides tangled up in an impossible knot of all the words she never said. She bites her nails until her fingers bleed. It's compulsive.

But there's something in the way she moves, something about her blue-brown eyes that softens the hearts of passerby, that makes strangers want to gather her up in their arms and make right everything that she made wrong, that makes them want to unwrap her tightly balled fists and massage her palms until the knot of tension in her chest, in her throat, in the very center of her heart loosens and gives way. She is the unwitting subject of poetry, songs, abject fantasies. She is resplendent in her loneliness and everyone wants to be the one to fix her.

In short, she's loved. Collectively. The world is waiting for her, arms outstretched.

All she has to do is look to the skies, to the streets, to the faces of the people around her and she will rise up, enlightened, filled to the brim with the newfound knowledge that she can be happy if she just lets go.

— Reed McConnell, II

# virginia

Her window was all the colors of a sea marsh today,  
Muted greens and a cold gold dust foaming  
And gleaming like the meeting mud.  
Her twilight eyes were blurry yet and saw among  
The bare branches of the trees a cobbled point,  
A garden path of confidences.  
She woke to the smell (the ancient, just-remembered smell)  
Of salt and crabshells locked and left by fleshy masters,

She woke and felt herself stretched and wanting,  
Cramped and curled in the small urban spaces of her bed.  
She put her hands to her hips (beneath the covers,  
Under the cold) and wished for the forgotten feel  
Of a heavy oil-skin raincoat and  
A pocket full of pebbles  
Not tomorrows.

— Olivia Schwob, I





*The Cat and the Teapot*, acrylic  
Wendy Du, III



*Chinese Mountains*, watercolor  
Camlinh To, I

# untitled

Picture a Little League Baseball diamond in the heat of summer. There is a game in progress. The boy in the on-deck circle is a sight to behold. Stocky, with an ill-fitting uniform, he clutches his bat in a death grip close to his chest, as he sweats, not from the heat, but from fear. His face pales as the umpire calls strike three on the current batter. The umpire's call comes straight from the diaphragm with the force of a small explosion, and ignores all rules of pronunciation, with an ending that slips off somewhere into oblivion: "YER-OOUUuu! (In English, this means 'You are out, please return to the dugout.')" Two outs, now, and the inning rests on his shaking shoulders. Here is a boy who never asked to be exposed to this kind of pressure, a boy who doesn't even like playing baseball. This is a boy who plays because he has been told that is what boys his age do. And now he is up to bat.

He walks as if home plate is a chopping-block, and the pitcher is his executioner. The pitcher is large, and too old to play in this division, but his father has a lot of influence in League management. He is the only boy in his division with a mustache. The batter's ears are assaulted by the cacophony of the diamond. From his own dugout, shouts of encouragement and last minute bits of advice from the coach are heard. In the stands, two fathers argue loudly over the umpire's last call, to the embarrassment of their children on the field. An orange, gravel-like composition underfoot, referred to as "dirt" although not like natural dirt in anyway, crunches relatively quietly with each timid step. The greatest amount of noise comes from the opposite dugout; hurtful rhymes aimed at the batter, jeers and taunts of every sort assault him. The team in the opposite dugout reminds him very much of a cage full of angry primates at the zoo. They shout, stomp, scream, and beat the chain link fencing surrounding them, not to mention the fact that they've made a mess of their dugout. Even from home plate, the batter can witness the devastation wreaked on that dugout by these boys. Wads of chewing gum litter the floor, and remarkably, the walls as well. Spit-covered piles of discarded sunflower seeds lie everywhere, the result of the opposing team discharging the seeds from between their teeth like bullets from a Tommy-gun. This filth, combined with a distinct lack of hygienic habits among those team members, produces an odor which has those in the stands wondering if there is a dead animal somewhere nearby, perhaps a skunk.

As the batter steps timidly into the batter's box, he appears to be praying, in earnest. He continues to shake mightily as he shoulders his aluminum bat, which gleams in the sun even as the boy's shaking causes it to vibrate so quickly that one could swear the bat were giving off a distinct note, much like a tuning fork. The gum in his mouth has long since lost its flavor, but the boy keeps chewing like he has a nervous twitch in his jaw, if only to distract himself from the situation at hand.

It is at this point that a genius in the opposing dugout strikes up a rousing chorus of that always popular Little League distraction: "Heeeeey batter batter; heeeeeey batter batter; heeeeey battabattabatta

SWING!!!" And swing he does. In a panic, he swings with such force that he is spun around on his heel, nearly falling over in the process.

"STEEERIKE ONE!"

The pitcher and the batter make eye contact. The pitcher sneers at the batter, looking very much like a bull in Pamplona just prior to its release into the streets. He winds up, and throws a fastball which heads straight for the batters face. The batter screams like a girl half his age, and hits the ground like a soldier protecting himself from shrapnel.

"BALL ONE!"

The batter summons the courage for one final stand. The heat of the sun beats down on his skin, the jeers from field and dugout alike fill the air, and dust from the field makes breathing difficult as he once again shoulders the bat. The pitch comes. It's a fast one, right down the middle of the strike zone. The batter begins his swing, decides he can't bear to look, and closes his eyes. The smack of contact between ball and bat travels through his hands and up his arms. The batter opens his eyes just in time to see his ball sailing high above the heads of every astonished player on the field, heading for the area beyond the fence.

The batter is more stunned than anyone else. He drops his bat, as he stares slack-jawed at the path the ball takes. For a while, he cannot hear anything. He can only watch. Then, the ball lands just within the bounds of the fence, and a torrent of sound rushes his ears. His team screams at him to get his attention.

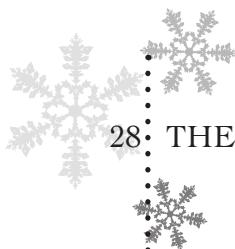
"RUN!!!"

Brought back to reality, the batter begins to sprint as he never has before. It is a race between him and the outfielders. The center fielder is halfway to the ball as the batter rounds first. He grabs onto it as the batter touches second. The long throw from the outfielder reaches the cutoff man just before the batter has made it passed third base. He covers half the distance to home plate when the catcher receives the ball.

Everyone is shouting at the top of their lungs. The batter is caught in a pickle between the third baseman and the catcher. All the poor kid can do is dodge for all he is worth. He runs back, and forth, and back, and forth, and back, and forth. The pitcher enters to relieve the catcher, his face the image of grim determination. But the third baseman makes an error, and the ball arcs high over the glove of the pitcher, who swears in exasperation. The terrified and exhausted batter seizes his chance. He runs for the plate as the pitcher runs for the ball. The batter slides headfirst into home plates in the second before he is tagged by the pitcher. As the pitcher begins an argument with the umpire, the batter's team rushes out of the dugout, cheering and smiling, congratulating their teammate.

As for the batter? He was simply glad he hadn't struck out.

— Myles McDonough, II



# JUST the *breeze*

Surely it's just the breeze...  
These will'o'wisps reminiscent of her lips,  
The sea-salt peppermints my eyes.  
I'll leave it to the ocean blue.

A heavenly gust or angel sneeze,  
Carry us slowly home on our ships.  
Raindrops fall, tears from the skies  
To give her the bottle that holds my virtue.

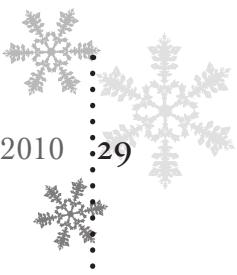
But with an incendiary ease  
Wind like this her hair will billow.  
To stay here I throw her grand lies;  
And she holds them, to try to unscrew.

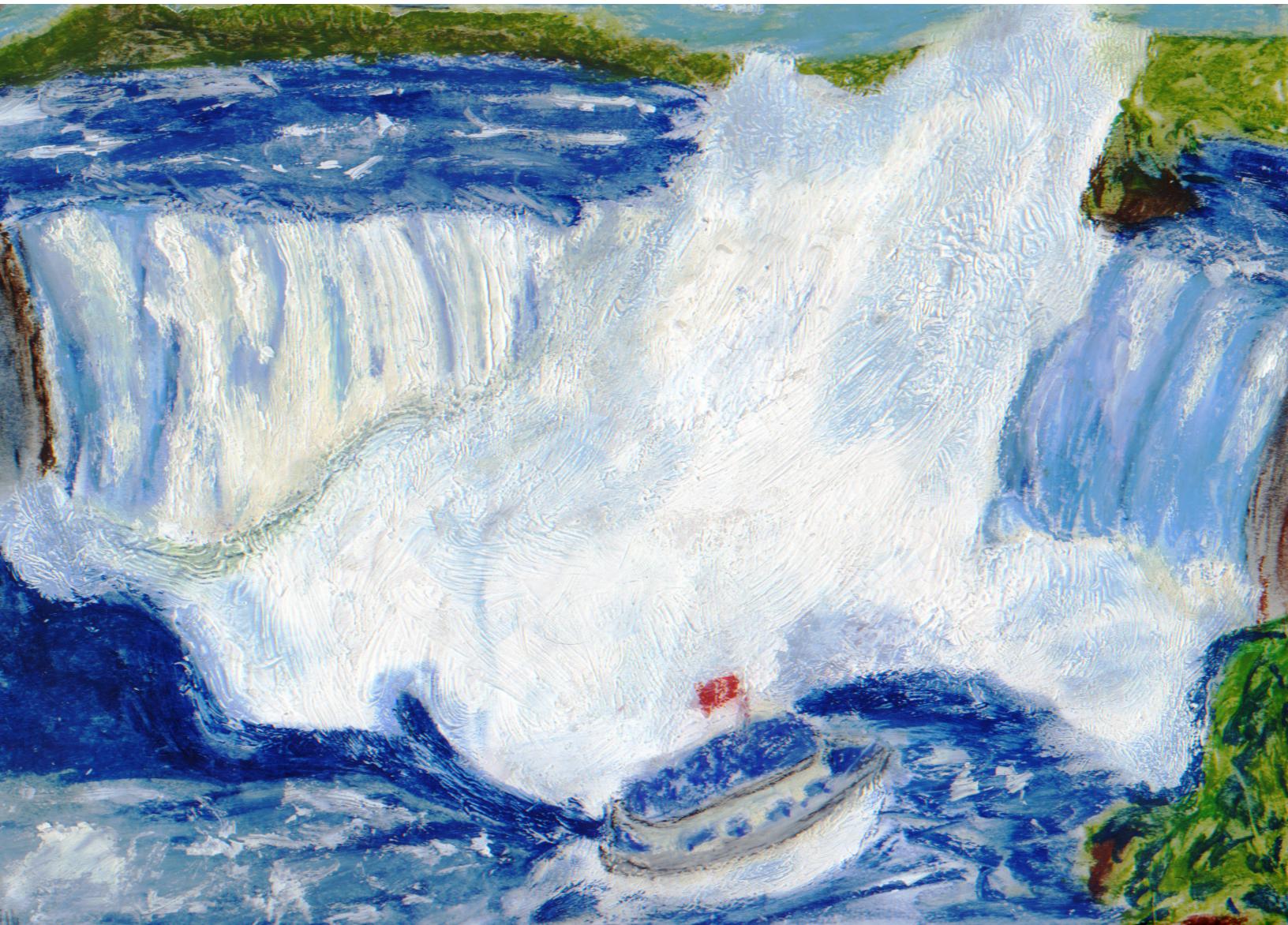
It drops me to my merry knees.  
Cascading down, a weeping willow;  
Maybe next, crosswise overboard flies  
She'll see my boat, for one final view.

But, surely it's just the breeze...  
Must I truly leave her a widow?  
My ultimatum, my final good-byes?  
She'll see my boat, for one final view.

But, surely it's just the breeze...

— Alec MacNeil, IV





*Niagara Falls*, oil pastel, acrylic  
Julie Wilk, V

# requiem

god-

if you flutter down to earth  
and settle within the dunes of a tired beach,  
press your palms into the Dust (of which we are and  
unto which we shall return)  
to find those remnants of broken battalions  
and glassy lead within fractured jaws-  
your Word was so well cherished...

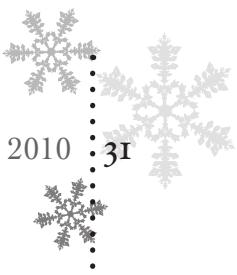
and if you lay between the weeping boughs of the willow  
hold those beads of Light and flimsy shadows  
and squeeze their fragrance underneath your fingernails  
to never forget the scent of  
warm earth and grainy lavender  
while your Image strips the plains...

and god-

if you alight inside the splintered beams in an airy roof  
stare across  
into the eyes of the clouds of sheep outside  
and I shall pour you a cup of History.

It tastes so much like empty.

— Adriana Lasso-Harrier, II





*backwards cat*, watercolor, Micron pen

Emily Mergel, I

# memories

You were always so radiant. Not beautiful, but radiant. People were always swarming around you, offering food, conversation, friendship. I know. From outside that circle, I was always watching, fascinated... not you, but the effect you had on people.

I know why I chose you.

Have you ever observed a street light in Vietnam? It was only at night that the ever-present pesky mosquitoes would leave passerbys alone. They would press against the cover of the street light, mesmerized by how it so inexplicably shone.

Don't you find it sad, the, that no matter how hard the mosquito pushed against the cover, it could never touch the light? Then again, even if it did, it's not as if the effort would've caused the jealous mosquito to replicate the light and share the glory. It was a mosquito after all.

Yet every night, without fail, the mosquito swarms around the street light.

I don't know why you chose me. Why did you approach me? Did you pity me, silently reading at the school lunch table why kids chattered all around me?

You were not the only one who reached out to me, standing awkwardly looking; but you were the only one who persisted even after your conscience left you alone.

Thank you.

Do you remember when we first talked? You probably don't. One day, you just abruptly pushed down my book and began to talk as if I would just listen, in a way only popular girls did.

I did listen. I listened for years after that. In me, small changes began. I laughed, I talked, I tied my hair back; but still the mosquito was definitely not a streetlight.

Would it be cynical to say that I always knew that our friendship would one day end?

I remember I told you once. You laughed and called it impossible and believed in what you said. Still, the sand tricked to the bottom of the hourglass, slowly, surely. I counted each grain, the knowledge of what was coming burning like acid in my stomach.

You walked with people who were only blank faces to me. You stopped taking the bus with me. You spoke of classes, of brands, of places I did not know. Our meetings grew sparser, the silences in conversation longer. You were again enveloped in that circle, except now you had no desire to reach out a hand to me, and I could not reach you. In fact, we saw each other so little I doubt you could even see me anymore.

For many years, I feared this... yet now that I am here... My heart aches, but it does not shatter or scream or bleed. The timer ran out, but in a quiet way, as if it was only natural.

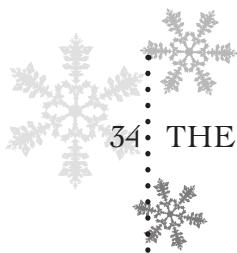
I look at my reflection in the mirror, and I wonder if the mosquito knew that it would never reach the light, would never become the light. Then I wonder if it would even matter to the insect. It would still be captivated by the light. It would still reach out for it.

We were great friends, you and I. Our bond was not a lie, just like the snapping of that bond wasn't a lie.

At the approach of sunrise, the newly-wise mosquito would inevitably flew away from the light; but perhaps now, it entertains the idea of being a firefly instead.

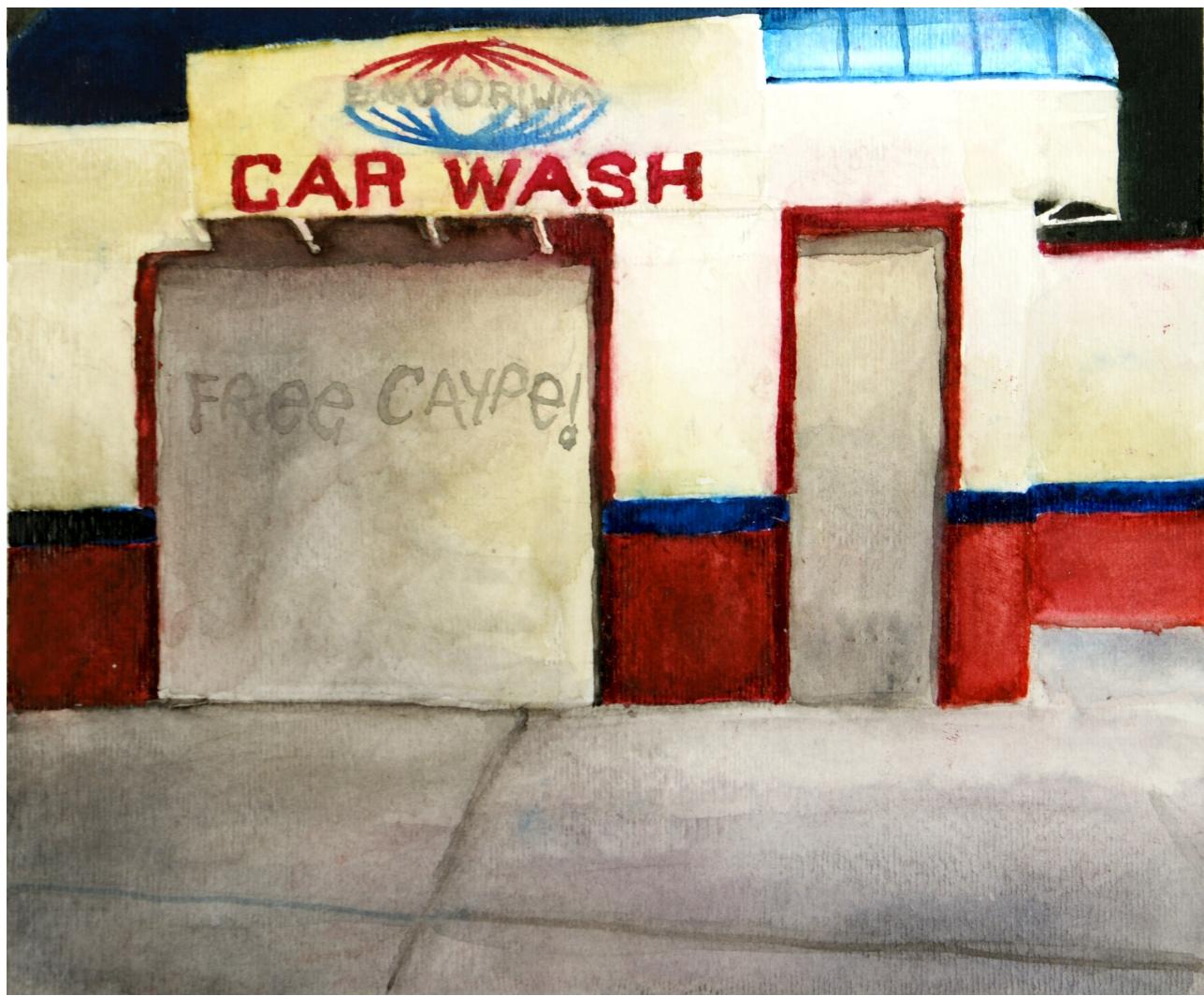
Perhaps it's already morphing.

— Nhu Le, IV





*Lennon*, scratchboard  
Aurelia Paquette, IV



*Washington Street*, watercolor

Ben Rukavina, I

# where i'm from

I'm from the dirty dirty,

The good dirty and the bad.

I'm from the pigeons' nests in the rafters, laden with downy eggs, full of awaiting life.

I'm from behind the peeling paint on rain soaked porches.

I'm from the cracks in damp sidewalks beneath grated down flip-flops,

I'm from beneath cloaks of dusty purple sky.

I'm from pacts, hands clasped, and never looking back.

I'm from looking back, too far and too hard.

I'm from lies, from the spiteful and the presumptuous, from the fearful and the inactive, the "Let it pass", eyes downcast,

allowing evil to seep into our foundations, and to split and fray what shields us.

I was born from the dirty.

I'm from the coal mines of Duryea, I'm the diamond, after lung cancer and 6 dead children, that the coal miner never saw polished, the glittering piece of carbon that becomes a black lump, every now and again.

I'm from the daughter of Manhattan's elite, intellectuals that leave stains on coffee tables and long-crafted dreams, wiped down and re-evaluated with time and effort and not a peep of protest.

I'm from dark varnish under fingernails, scratched from long pews, the candle wax melted at a nighttime vigil. I'm from the stained glass no longer visited, from the flannel sheets seldom kneeled by, but rested upon with peaceful breaths.

I'm from daily baptisms in grainy pages and black typeface, in brushstrokes and the creamy shadows of a cupcake; occasionally, I'm from the cleansing squeals of children's laughter, from the smell of new rain on filthy pigeons' eggs, on the wood beneath peeling paint.

I'm from keeping a Pledge wipe in my heart at all times, I'm from not apologizing anymore, I'm from the dirty, I'm not always in the dirty now.

I sleep in the curve of a pool of green eyes, in a ring of Caribbean waters surrounding an ink black reef of coral.

I'm Liz's lifeline,

Blair and Joe's bloodline,

I'm from the Red Line when the train doesn't come for forty minutes, in fall, winter or spring.

Behind the yellow-line, toeing its bumpy nubs, I'm dancing, laughing.

I'm from the dirty, but I'm clean.

— Emily Mergel, I

# a letter from life

My beloved children,  
I wish, for an instant, that you could be me  
    and touch what I touch  
    and see what I see.

I wish that your love could fill every creature,  
    that each one had a piece of your soul,  
And that every new seedling which burst from the earth  
    you'd bless with a kiss  
    and cry tears of joy.

I wish you could mourn the end of each journey,  
That every passing would break your heart,  
Yet welcome back warmly the travelers weary  
and start them on their passage anew.

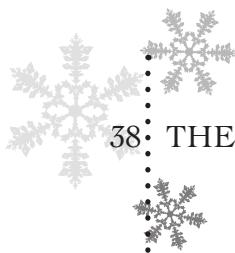
I wish you could see the perfect beauty  
    of a tiny hummingbird stretching her wings,  
Or hear the song of a thousand flowers,  
    sighing with joy for the coming of spring.

I wish you could feel each snowflake touch earth  
and know that the sky is saying hello,  
And tuck the trees  
    In their own bed of leaves  
    And whisper "sweet dreams."

I wish you could smell the sweet scent of green  
    and taste the syrupy sunlight,  
Or answer the wolves who sing to the stars  
    in the cold and glittering night.

I wish, for an instant, that you could be me  
    then you'd love what I love  
    and you'd see all I see.

— Marina Napoletano, II



*Hermit*, Micron Pen

Winnie Chen, I





*Yesteryear*, photograph  
Reed McConnell, II

# nobody (forget)

Today I let myself be  
Anonymous, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_  
blank slate, come  
paint your context.  
onto me whatever colors  
you like skin pulsate  
under wet shiny paint my fingertips  
are  
yours.  
I'm a  
poetry prostitute,  
project your own desires  
onto the words (my skin)  
use my periods, commas  
to your own devices, beat the soul  
out  
(black eyes can't see meaning)  
make love to your money  
forget me when you leave

— Anonymous

# subway tracks

## *{i'll follow you}*

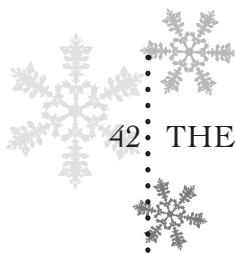
I don't think you know how proud I felt when you maneuvered your way through the subway tracks. I don't think you know how proud I felt when your toes slipped through the tracks, making pirouettes past the electric parts that would kill you. I really liked that. Your fingers slipped through the electronic systems of the MBTA and jumped over the automatic doors that opened for you, because you're worth it. Like L'Oreal. Or maybe you were born with it. Like Maybelline. And maybe, just maybe you'll believe me when I tell you that I don't think I've ever met anybody like you before.

You told me how loud the screeching of the tracks was, and how fast the Tropicana ads flew by, and how horribly depressing the other people on the train looked. But honestly, I didn't care. It couldn't have been rush hour on a Wednesday afternoon; no, it was more like a Thursday night at 10 when nobody was on the trains at all (except the sleeping dead). It was dark enough, and we were happy enough then. Maybe because Friday was coming, or maybe because we just were and we should have just accepted it for what it is because we're never happy anymore anyway. I don't want time to turn back, and I don't want us to melt back into the mold of the train people like oil paints. I just want to feel alive; I want to feel it all.

You say that buses make you happier than trains. You say that it's because you can see outside, that you can breathe in fresh air, that you can hear more than just crying babies across the train. No, you say that you can see light above ground, among cars, among people. But I feel like we can be together underneath the world, underneath the weight of the earth and the ground above. I feel like we can just be alone, even if I'm afraid of the dark.

We travel to the farthest bounds of the red line. We travel to Quincy. We travel to Cambridge. We travel anywhere but home, and that's okay, because I don't really like home right now. I called you first when my mom kicked me out, even though you live ten miles away from me. And now we're going even farther away from both our houses, and I like that. I'm grateful. But you don't like acknowledgements like that, you say. It makes your ego burst, you say. But I don't think so. You're navigating through these streets like a pro, you know. We don't even live here. You say you were born here, and I say, "That's a lie." But you keep walking, throwing an "I know" over your shoulder.

We walk back to another station, and sit down on the bench outside. I don't have any money to keep traveling. You say you'll put it on my tab, like you're my bartender. But my bartender is a plump 45-year-old man with a wife and two kids, I tell you. And you tell me that sounds like an honorable man.



And I agree.

I think I'm afraid that I'm defined by you. I think I'm afraid I do everything you say (I only think this because of what they said and now I'm doubting myself). Is this bad? That I don't like being alone, and that I don't like making my own decisions? That I won't know what to do by myself after you go back home?

"No," you say. "But you'll learn."

And then without any warning, you start running down the stairs into the screeching depths of the city. "Race you!" you shout halfway down the stairs.

It frustrates me what a confident ass you are sometimes, but I can't help but smile. And then I follow, keys and coins falling out of my pockets.

— Andy Vo, II



*Substation*, watercolor

Ben Rukavina, I



*Bumblebee Tea Party*, watercolor

Mariah Harrington, I

# fooled

Maybe the stars are not stuck up there  
But really sliding around in a buttery sky  
Changing their positions every so often  
Like a little league soccer team  
In an organic neighborhood

And Maybe I'm stuck down here  
Glued to the sidewalk  
Tilting my head up  
Fooling myself into believing  
That every night is covered by the same  
Cellophane sky wrapper

And that's why the birds look so clever

Because they know that we are trapped  
And they are free  
And no one really forgets  
A childhood dream  
Of sprouting wings in the morning.

— Maya Nojehowicz, II



*[Untitled]*, photograph  
Caitlyn Pearson, II

# City at nightfall

the faces of  
men laughing together smoking leering at  
women and children like rabbits scampering onto  
trains attention passengers: the next red line train to braintree is now arriving  
music hidden in  
their ears and talking over  
noise like forgotten newspapers crackling crinkling rustling underneath  
the feet of  
children like rabbits and laughing men who never stop and look around  
at the sound of  
the desolate tramp who shouts “got any spare change?” into  
the gathering dusk they just gather up  
their rustling newspapers and walk away while the shouting of  
the tramp grows dim like the sun under  
the silent glow of  
the streetlights

— Shoshanna Minsk, IV

# friday april 25th, 2009

Friday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Ashley waited impatiently for the bus to come. She only had about twenty minutes to get to school and she just could not risk getting another tardy detention. She tried to calm herself down, tried to stop herself from pacing back and forth, and tried to stop the anger that was building inside of her. *Where the heck is this bus*, was all she kept muttering.

When the bus finally swerved to her stop, she tapped her student Charlie card on the machine and walked on. As she walked on the bus she noticed the copies of the Metro and decided to pick one up. Ashley wasn't very fond of the Metro because it was known to be absolute garbage. *There's a reason it's free*, she always told people. However today she picked it up without any thought, almost as if her body was controlling her, drawing her toward it.

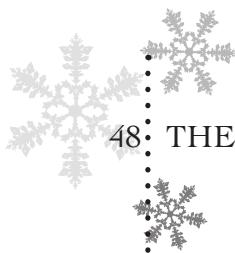
When she opened up the Metro she saw the usual garbage it offered. It was filled with stories that no other newspaper would print, stories that were false, or stories that no one cared about. As she continued to read, she stumbled across something that caught her eye. *Boy, age 14 killed on Geneva Ave – police are investigating*. Next to the story there was a picture of the boy; it was one of those middle school pictures that are taking at the beginning of every school year. The ones that every kid made a big deal about and your mom is so proud of that she places it in the living room for everyone to see how *cute my baby is*. The boy in the picture had on a crisp white button up shirt; it looked as if his mother had ironed, and re-ironed the shirt several times until not even God could find an imperfection in it. He had the biggest brightest grin as if he were having the time of his life sitting on that uncomfortable hard stool they made you sit on.

Ashley looked over at the boys name *Rashawn "Ray-Ray" Jones*. The name didn't ring any bells so she began to close the newspaper when she decided to take one more look at it. As she stared at the picture, analyzing and overanalyzing every last detail of it, her body kept telling her something, telling her she knew him, telling her that his face was somewhere deeply embedded in her mind. When Ashley got to her stop she dropped the newspaper and got off. As she was walking to school she kept thinking of the boys face, wondering where she may have met him, bumped into him, or even had a conversation with him. It wasn't until she walked into the school building did it hit her right in the face. She didn't know him.

Monday April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009

Ashley waited for the bus to come. She usually hated waiting for anything but today she was in no rush to get home. She would rather be outside than to be inside her dull house. Ashley hated the way the silence at home over filled the place. It was not the calming kind of silence but the eerie, awkward silence. It was the kind of deadly silence that reminded her how lonely and sad life really was.

As Ashley waited for the bus she felt someone rush by her, she turned to see a boy about her age



power walking. There was something strange about the way he walked. As if he wanted to give the illusion that everything was normal. However Ashley could tell by the way he kept looking over his shoulder and the fact that she could hear his heavy breathing, practically feel his heart beating faster and faster that something was wrong, very wrong.

Then it happened. *BANG! BANG*, came the loud firecrackers. The sound of it electrified the whole street, and everyone rushed over to see what had just happened, including Ashley. It wasn't curiosity or wanting to know *what good for nothing teenager had died now* that led Ashley toward the noise. It was the fact that her feet took off on their own; running, carrying her to the scene.

By the time Ashley got there, a crowd was already forming, but she could see clearly what had happened. Sprawled on the floor was a young boy. He looked about 15 years and Ashley couldn't help but feel relieved she didn't know him. Yet something about this boy still pained her. It wasn't as if death was something new to her, growing up in this neighborhood death was as common as mosquitoes in the summer time. Ashley had heard of many deaths, had many family members killed, and had many family members arrested for murder, but never had she seen someone dead before her very eyes.

Around the dead body there was something forming, it was a bright red color. The red substance was turning into a red pool around the body and it got bigger and thicker every second. It took Ashley a few seconds to realize what she was looking at was a pool of blood. The red liquid was oozing out of the boy until his whole body was baptized in blood. Blood was oozing onto the floor until that whole section of the sidewalk had been painted red. The blood was overtaking the whole scene, the odor of it overwhelming her nostrils, filling them with a weird metal smell. She felt the blood filling her nose, clogging it, making it impossible to breathe. *Oh My God I have to get out of here*, she thought as she ran away, pushing by people violently trying to separate herself from all of this before she was completely nauseated.

Ashley ran practically sprinted back to the bus stop. The bus pulled up when she got there and she got on. She stood on the bus, suffocating the railing, gripping the cold steel with all her might. She could feel her whole body shaking, her mind spinning madly. Her breath was getting heavier and she kept looking behind her waiting, almost expecting for someone to come after her next. When she got home she frantically looked for her keys and with her hands shaking opened the door. She walked into the quiet room and the ghostly atmosphere filled her with more fear. She knew she had no one to talk to about this event. *Ain't the first shooting and it ain't gonna be the last* that was all her mother would say.

Ashley laid down on her bed. She couldn't get the boy's body out of her mind, the way his body laid there limp and lifeless. She began crying, crying harder than she had ever cried before. Crying for the boy, for the boy who probably once smiled, the boy whose mother would probably be devastated to lose her baby, the boy she didn't know. As the tears ran down her face she could taste the salty metallic flavor they had. The metallic flavor that reminded her of the metal smell of the blood, the blood that over filled her brain, drowning her in it. She realized the more she thought of it the more it would haunt her. *This never happened, I never saw him, I don't know him, this isn't real, and I don't care.* Thinking this satisfied Ashley, this boy's death was just another teenager dead, it wasn't as if she knew him personally, wasn't as if she knew his name. It wasn't as if anyone after today would even be talking about him. *Or would they?*

— Vanessa Omoroghomwan, II



*[Untitled]*, Micron pen

Tamika Reid, I





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